DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 602 CG 027 475

AUTHOR Pryzwansky, Walter B.
TITLE Making Psychologists Indispensable in the Schools: Collaborative Training Approaches Involving Educators and School Psychologists.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 5p.; In: Making Psychologists in Schools Indispensable: Critical Questions and Emerging Perspectives. Greensboro, NC. ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse, 1996. p67-70; see CG 027 464.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Teacher Induction; *Counselor Teacher Cooperation; *Counselor Training; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Professional Development; School Counseling; *School Psychologists; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

There has been an increasing commitment to the notion of collaboration among professionals who have a responsibility for a client. However, the need for psychological services still seems to receive little impetus from teacher and principal requests. Furthermore, the teacher continues to operate as an isolated professional. Preservice education and the induction period for the teaching profession should be the primary emphasis for effecting the goal of making psychologists indispensable in the schools. Through planned collaborations in the field during preservice training, each professional could learn about the perspectives of the other along with an appreciation of potential professional collaborations. A second opportunity for reinforcing the earlier "bonding" experience of teachers and school psychologists is the critical need to provide new teachers with a supportive induction period as one means to address the attrition rate among teachers. The absence of a supportive network and work environment for teachers has been a long recognized handicap for this profession. The school psychology training program, through its faculty and/or students, along with local school psychological services staff can provide a valuable resource to such a program. Peer mediated learning strategies to promote teacher retention can also be facilitated by school psychologists through organization and promotion of collegial dialogue. (JBJ)

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Chapter Eleven

Making Psychologists Indispensable in the Schools: Collaborative Training Approaches Involving Educators and School Psychologists

Walter B. Pryzwansky

During the last decade there has been increasing commitment to the notion of collaboration among professionals who have a professional responsibility for a client. A partially conceptual, and partially economically driven notion, the education field has embraced such a goal. In fact, the passage of Public Law 94-142, in which professional team decision-making regarding placement of children in programs for exceptional children, can be viewed as a unique event that reinforced the more general zeitgeist of collaboration.

While the employment opportunities increased dramatically in public schools for school psychologists following the adoption of P.L. 94-142, that demand continues to be the result of the externally driven rationale. The need for psychological services still seems to receive little impetus from teacher and principal requests, or from a concept of schooling which is based on inclusion of a psychological perspective to facilitate teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, the teacher continues to operate as an isolated professional. At best, the teacher has educational resource professionals to consult with, and increasingly fewer options of sending his/her students to resources to receive teaching and learning experiences except for short periods of the day. The teacher is the lowest paid "professional" in the school building and in spite of his/her central role, struggles to get through the day. One would be surprised if, even occasionally, the teacher did not express envy of other educational specialists (e.g., counselors, administrators, social workers, school psychologists) who can control the experiences they encounter during their professional day.

Previously I have drawn the unfavorable description of the teacher's role in comparison to the role of the TV anchors of the local broadcast, wherein all aspects of the television company's operation are concentrated on success of the anchor; in effect, the efforts of the educational enterprise should equally be designed to ensure the success of the individual teacher (Pryzwansky, 1996). Such a premise seems axiomatic to the goal of a successful school, yet we drift to the argument of presenting the administrator as the instructor leader, or elevating the status of the resource school professionals at the expense of the teacher. While this chapter is not the place to comprehensively address the lag in professionalizing the teacher's role, this issue should not be forgotten in any discussion of this sort. Rather, the preceding description, broadly described with some acknowledged liberties, serves as the context for the following comments. Thus, I am choosing preservice education of

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teachers and the induction period for the teaching profession, in particular, as the primary emphasis for effecting the goal of making psychologists indispensable in the schools.

If, indeed, it is expected that professionals will work together as colleagues, and on teams, then it seems logical that they should be given the opportunity to train for such a collaboration. In general, school psychology faculty members have taught minimally in teacher education programs and school psychology graduate students have had little contact with teachers-in-training or educational specialists being trained at the graduate level (Buktenica, 1970; Pryzwansky, 1994). This observation is surprising, particularly given the fact that the "team" idea seems so prevalent in today's education literature. There are few examples of training educational professionals to work together, let alone systematic efforts designed to provide knowledge about the educational resource support professionals that teachers can expect to be available to them, or how to utilize these services in an effective manner (Blair, Dodd, Pohlman, & Pryzwansky, manuscript in preparation; Jackson et al., 1993). The current Professional Development School models of training being adopted by Schools of Education imply that a significant amount of clinical training will be provided in the preservice teacher training curriculum. Consequently, the opportunity exists for school psychologists in training from the same university to contribute relevant support and assistance to the student teacher and thereby enrich their practical training. Through planned collaborations in the field during the preservice training each professional could learn about the perspectives of the other along with an appreciation of the potential of professional collaborations. No doubt a sharper sense of how to structure methods for facilitating their roles will emerge also. Too often, school psychology graduate students search for "consultation" cases, and student teachers (like their classroom teacher mentors) seek out colleagues with whom they wish to share ideas and garner some support. This change in training emphasis presents an ideal opportunity to bring these professionals together to learn about each others' contributions to the goal of educating children and to forge out ways of working together in the future.

A second opportunity for reinforcing the earlier "bonding" experience of teachers and school psychologists during preservice training rests with another current development, i.e., the attention being paid to the critical need to provide new teachers with a supportive induction period as one means to address the attrition rate among teachers (Wolfe & Smith, 1996). The absence of a supportive network and work environment for teachers has been a long recognized handicap for this profession (Sarason, 1971, 1996). Few professional groups treat their members with such a "sink or swim" attitude. It should not be surprising then to discover that the 50% attrition rate is alarmingly high (Gordon, 1991). While the reasons for this phenomenon reflect other factors as well, such as the work conditions and salary conditions of teachers, the shortcomings of no or inadequate induction models are apparent. Furthermore, being a new teacher may often mean having to cope under rather poor conditions, such as the science teacher assigned to teach in five different classrooms so that all materials are hoisted on a handcart and moved from classroom to classroom. Similarly, the most "difficult" classrooms may be assigned to them. While novice teacher war stories abound, both good and bad, the good news is that recently educators have renewed their advocacy for a strong, systematic induction and mentoring programs (Wolfe & Smith, 1996). The school psychology training program, through its faculty and/or students, along with local school psychological services staff can provide a valuable resource to such a program. One such example was recently described by Babinski (1996) in which beginning teachers

participated in a volunteer program offered jointly by one faculty member from both the school psychology program and elementary education program at a major university. These faculty members provide a year long teacher support group for beginning teachers so that all sorts of challenges experienced by the teacher throughout the various phases of the year will receive attention. Clearly, both types of resource professionals working collaboratively with each other, and with the beginning teachers, can help lay the foundation for a dynamic effective career in teaching.

In a related manner, the use of peer mediated learning experiences as a supportive strategy has begun to take hold (Zins, 1996) and serves as an appropriate activity for new as well as experienced teachers. Basically, such informal or formal collegial learning systems can be designed to promote cooperative problem solving, provide support for professional learning and development, and encourage professional interaction and exchange (Pryzwansky, 1996). School psychologists should have the skills to facilitate the organization and promotion of collegial dialogue. Johnson and Pugach (1996) reported that through structured dialogue, teachers generated parsimonious interventions and were able to work diligently on implementing those plans. Such successful peer collaboration followed from a brief training session; it warrants continued attention and study by school psychologists.

As a psychological specialty, the goals of introducing and integrating school psychological services into the school setting are more unique than those of other educational specialties. School psychologists identify primarily with the psychology discipline and because of cohort-based training models have limited shared graduate training with educational personnel, even when the program is housed within a school of education. This model of training has intensified with the changes in credentialing requirements during the past ten years. While research has shown that the once common requirement that school psychologists hold a license as a teacher does not ensure greater teacher satisfaction with the service (Gerner, 1981), the specialty may have drifted too far from the idea behind such a requirement. Therefore, the early, substantive, integration of training experiences of teachers (and administrators) with school psychologists (and other support professionals) seems long overdue. As argued above, it should contribute to a richer preparation for the demanding roles they all face and promote the integration of their efforts toward a positive and successful educational system. While this paper has emphasized changes from a training program perspective, the implications for the school psychologist practitioner are apparent. Finally, an appreciation of each professional's potential for enhancing the teaching and learning process should lead to a commitment to this approach as a means for serving children and parents.

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